



4/27/2009

Town Common Master Plan Public Participation Report

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“As a mother of three small children, I would love to see some play equipment installed at the Town Common.”

Comment from K. Blount, Greenville, N.C.

Executive Summary

The goal of the Town Common Master Plan Process is to develop specific strategies that will ensure this unique facility achieves its full potential as an integrated gathering place for Greenville’s citizens, while preserving green-space for future generations in the best tradition of park stewardship. The public input sessions that culminated in the assembly of this document were designed to identify specific concerns with the park as it currently functions, while also gaining insight into the vision and priorities of Greenville’s citizens.

Town Common is unique in that all of Greenville’s residents consider it “their” park. Consequently, City staff felt compelled to achieve the maximum exposure for our planning efforts by going well beyond the typical public input process. To achieve this, the first public meeting was held in City Council Chambers. This enabled the event to be televised, thus achieving maximum exposure, and creating the opportunity for rebroadcast. Additionally, dedicated email and a phone message services were provided to further maximize public input potential.

The second public input session built on the information obtained from the first. Comments were distilled into categories, thus enabling City staff to group like comments and create a final comment tally. This information was provided to the second session’s participants. During that meeting, each participant selected their first, second and third priorities and provided a rationale for each. A detailed “roll-up” of these comments are provided in this document, with a brief comment summary is as follows:

Concerns:

- First Street is too wide, thus separating the park from the urban landscape. Despite this significant width, reasonable parking and access to Town Common is very constrained.

- The park is underutilized, with few if any recreational opportunities or amenities to attract users on a day to day basis.
- There is no meaningful connectivity to the Tar River.
- While the park's emphasis is on events, the event spaces are poorly thought out and designed. This results in considerable and unnecessary impact to the park green-space from a high level of vehicular traffic in the park during events.
- The radio tower facility should be removed due to appearance, space usage, and safety concerns.

Citizen Recommendations:

- Reduce the width of First Street to make Town Common more connected to Uptown Greenville. Use the space to make the street more park-friendly and interesting, provide event support sites, and parking spaces.
- The concept of a pedestrian bridge connecting the park to greenways on the north side of the river was highly supported.
- The park provides an opportunity for gardens, memorials, history education, and public art.
- A public structure that provides basic amenities (restrooms) and picnicking potential is needed. The aforementioned gardens/memorials, etc. could be incorporated into this structure.
- Meaningful river access and interaction was strongly supported, with the potential for canoe/kayak rental.
- Expand event opportunities, including movies.

The Town Common is a precious, unique space that requires a carefully conceived plan to meet its full potential. The participants in this planning process seemed to fully grasp this challenge and provided well founded insights throughout. The following is a list of priorities conceived during the public process. Each of these priorities will be developed in greater detail in later phases of this master planning project.

1

Public Priority: Tar River Pedestrian Bridge

Although the City's River Park North nature facility is plainly visible across the Tar River from Town Common, the two recreation facilities are currently not linked for pedestrians. Greenville's citizens indicated a strong priority for linking the two facilities by way of a pedestrian bridge. Construction of such a project will also link current and future phases of the City's Greenway System.



2

Public Priority: Structures

While the band shell structure on Town Common includes limited restroom facilities for use by performers, there are no public restroom facilities on the grounds for use by the general public. Portable chemical toilets are typically used for large public events such as the annual 4th of July celebration. Survey data and public meeting comments indicate a strong desire to provide permanent restroom facilities on the Town Common for use during events held on site. Survey results indicated some public interest in a multipurpose education structure as well.



3

Public Priority: Site Improvements

Much of the infrastructure in the Town Common is either dated, or was installed in an ad-hoc manner. Based on public input, favored site improvements include parking, lighting, walking trails picnic sites along with an improved esplanade.



4

Public Priority: Civic Art

Through both oral and written comments, the public strongly supported the inclusion of public art as part of any improvement program to the Town Common. Public art need not be a stand alone item, but instead can be integrated into such programming as “spray-grounds” and landscape elements.



5

Public Priority: Gardens

In its current configuration, the Town Common presents an open grassy park, with little formal landscaping other than small bushes and scattered canopy trees. Public comments included calls for formalized gardens perhaps along trails or through the creation of “pocket” memorial gardens.



6

Public Priority: Memorials

Over the years, a variety of memorials have been erected on Town Common to include those that honor veterans, a church that once stood on the site along with a sun dial commemorating the recent millennium. Public survey results point to the importance of memorials, while public comments emphasize the need for careful planning of the same memorials.



7

Public Priority: River Access

Despite its location along the southern bank of the Tar River, Greenville's Town Common provides surprisingly little opportunity for interaction with the river. Greenville's citizens favor additional access to the river including kayaking and access to trail systems along the river bank.



8

Public Priority: Vendor Spaces

While the provision of vendor spaces was not one of the higher public priorities, public comments indicated an understanding of the need to organize such spaces to facilitate events such as the annual 4th of July celebration and the International Festival.



TOWN COMMON MASTER PLAN

MASTER PLAN PROGRAMMING SURVEY 2009

PROGRAMMING ELEMENTS

PERSONAL PRIORITY

Please prioritize these elements by checking the appropriate box

	HIGH	MED	LOW	DON'T WANT
Buildings and Structures				
Space for Event Vendors	18	22	7	0
Public Restroom Facilities	35	9	4	1
Outdoor Movie Theater	19	16	12	1
Enclosed Shelter	15	16	13	5
Multi-Purpose Educational Building	15	9	18	6
Piers at River	23	12	6	2
*Pedestrian Bridge (Over Tar River to River Park North)	39	10	1	0
New Boat Launch	15	12	12	5
Small "SprayGround" Water Play Equipment	16	18	6	2
Picnic Sites (table on concrete pad, no shelter)	21	16	5	1
Visitor Center / Kiosk	18	4	8	7
Hardscape and Open Spaces				
Parking Lot and Vehicular Circulation Improvements	23	15	9	1
Additional Street Lighting	28	12	6	0
Waterfront Plaza / Promenade (Closer to Water)	19	16	8	1
Realignment of 1st Street with Traffic Calming	20	14	9	4
Site Lighting Improvements	26	11	2	1
Site Furnishings	14	19	7	2
Outdoor Chess Tables	11	15	15	4
Intimate Plazas	13	12	14	3
Spaces for Outdoor Public Art	25	15	7	1
Small Amphitheater for Outdoor Classes and Gatherings	12	17	9	5
Murals	12	16	11	6
Space for Memorials and Historical Information	23	15	11	3
Water Features and Fountain	17	12	11	1
Gardens	23	14	5	1
Walking Trails	31	10	0	0
Miscellaneous				
New Sound System at Amphitheater	15	16	12	5
Pedestrian Connections to Uptown	30	11	2	3
Relocate Radio Tower Off-Site	22	13	3	4

Public Comments

Pedestrian Bridge to River Park North

1. The City should develop both sides of the river to maximize available land for park use.
2. A bridge over the Tar River should be iconic and identifiable only to Greenville, North Carolina.
3. A connection from Town Common to River Park North would make both parks accessible to the public, and would actually increase the usage of River Park North.
4. The City should work on State funding to get the bridge over the Tar River as soon as possible.

Vendor Spaces

5. Vendors along the esplanade and the bridge across the Tar River to River Park North can help create an atmosphere where the City can have more community celebrations and festivals; these elements could bring more tourists to the City.

Gardens

6. A downtown trail should be created that connects to Town Common.
7. Gardens, memorials and pedestrian walks along the river would provide a place to come and relax; these elements would also bring visitors to the City, and act as a tourist attraction.

River Access (Esplanade, Piers, Boat Ramp)

8. The City should celebrate the Tar River; it is the focal point of both Town Common and River Park North.
9. The City should promote boating, kayaking and river tourism.
10. The City should incorporate a river boat that houses a restaurant; this boat should also have plays and live music.
11. The City should explore a trail of demand to River Park North by use of a ferry from Town Common.

Public Structures

12. There should be an Art Center
13. The existing amphitheater should be programmed and used as an outdoor classroom and informal incentive programs.
14. The existing amphitheater should be improved and a backstage area with lighting should be added.
15. Why can't the waterfront at Town Common look like the waterfront in "Little Washington?"
16. Support facilities for events should be housed at Town Common.
17. Town Common needs more picnic tables and a shelter.
18. The park needs public restrooms and a multi-purpose building that has a ticket center, a museum of history and tourist information center.
19. There should be a playground area for children.
20. Provide a doggie depot with water fountain (s).
21. The City should look into revenue generating events such as rental spaces for banquets and weddings.

Memorials

22. The City of Greenville should commemorate the history of the Tar River, and provide an overall history of the park.
23. The City should commemorate the history of the Tar River.
24. Sycamore Missionary Baptist Church is deserving of a proper memorial as well as the availability of historical information. There should be a permanent and more prominent landmark.
25. The history of this property and the river should be preserved. It may be the only way our children and grandchildren learn about the beginning of Greenville, the ancestry and the importance of the Tar River.

Public Art

26. There should be a cascading wall with accent lighting.
27. Public art is a great way to reproduce the values of a community. Please use this feature to promote interactivity and social engagements.
28. Public art always enhances a public park.
29. The Arts Council is willing to help out with public art ventures; the council could find artist for permanent and temporary art.

Site Improvements (Lighting, Parking, Paths etc.)

30. The use of storm water to create a water feature should be considered.
31. The scale of 1st Street is too large for users; the street should be narrowed, and traffic calming devices should be incorporated to promote downtown residential development.
32. Site improvements with ornamental lighting, site furnishing and parking are crucial in encouraging citizens to use Town Common routinely.
33. The City should narrow 1st Street and add diagonal parking with planted median.
34. The City should improve the visual and physical connection between Uptown Greenville and the river; there should be organized spaces and circulation.
35. Getting the site prepared for additional improvements should be the number 1 priority.
36. Additional lighting is important in addressing issues with security and safety in the park.